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THE AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN VISIT

Francis James' fourth and fifth articles on the visit of the Australian Anglican delegation to China are in Episcopal Church News for March 3 and 17.

The fourth article begins with some religious statistics. The total Christian body in mainland China is 3,700,000 of which 2,500,000 are Roman Catholics. The Church of Christ in China has 160,000 members, and the Anglican Church (Sheng Kung Hui) just over 40,000. He considers these figures very exact because they represent people actually registered in their respective churches and reported to the Government. The above figures would seem to credit the Protestants with a membership of 1,200,000. He says, "The overall figures claimed by the multifarious missionary bodies before the Second World War were considerably greater," but this office does not know of any official figures which gave Protestant membership as over a million. He thinks that the Sheng Kung Hui was more conservative in its membership statistics in the past than other denominations, and so its figures today are "closer to those claimed before the war than those of any other denomination." This statement is rather puzzling. 1949 statistics gave the CCC 176,983 members, now down to 160,000, according to his report. The Sheng Kung Hui in 1949 reported 76,741 members, now down to just over 40,000. What pre-war statistics Mr. James was using I do not know.

The main body of the article reports an interview with Ho Chen-hsiang, 54 year old Director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs. Mr. James found him very likable. When James commented that it was surprising to find a Communist atheist in such a job, Ho replied, "Why not? You can imagine the outcry the Moslems would make if I were a Christian, or the fuss most Christians would make if I didn't belong to their 'party'."

Mr. Ho was quite frank about the irreconcilability of Christianity and Marxism, at least in theory. He said, "We stand upon our common ground, and maintain our differences." He admitted that Communist freedom of religious belief was a matter of policy rather than of principle. He said, "You cannot root out religion by force. Though I believe some of your Christian parties have tried to do so in old times in Europe. The People's State does not want victims or martyrs. It wants cooperation and support. Between socialism and religion I do not believe there is any necessary antipathy." (Note the significant change here from Marxism or Communism to the more neutral term socialism.) He goes on to claim that in this policy of cooperation with the Government most of Roman Catholics and all of the Christians (i.e. Protestants) see that they are on the correct path.

Then James raised the question of freedom to criticize the Government. "In the West," he said, "you often hear of clergymen and even bishops attacking their government's policies from

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the pulpit. What about China?"

Mr. Ho replied, "Well, I can quite understand Christians overseas criticizing their governments' policies. But that of course is entirely your own affair, and has nothing to do with China, so I shall not discuss it. Here, it is not true to say that we discourage criticism. On the contrary, we are always glad of it. But criticism is different from attacking the government. There are many faults in China today. These can only be remedied if they are criticized. The churches have as much right as anyone to mention them. They are encouraged to do so in a constructive way."

Mr. James pressed the point. "If all is as you say, then why are there so many Christian leaders still in prison? To my certain knowledge there are four Roman Catholic bishops and three Protestants. And Wang Ming-tao and our own Bishop Kimber Den have only just been released from jail. If that is not religious persecution, then what is it?"

In answer Mr. Ho maintained his position that each of these men had committed, or was supposed to have committed some political offense, so that none of these cases meant religious persecution. He was embarrassed about the Kimber Den case, and admitted an injustice there, but it was an injustice unconnected with religious policy. "I agree that the handling of his case was not at all satisfactory. I can only say that we welcome your criticisms over this, and that those who were responsible for the delays, which are the most unsatisfactory aspect of this case, have been severely punished. I should also say that the whole matter was outside my jurisdiction. At a former stage, everyone knows that many unfortunate things happened with regard to Protestants and Roman Catholics. But if you look at it objectively, you must admit that it was a natural reaction by many Chinese people after the things that had been done against China under the guise of missionary work. It was never the policy of the Government."

He then went on to discuss relations with churches abroad. Regarding Roman Catholics, he said, "Our policy is to welcome ecclesiastical relations with the Vatican. Each diocese can directly contact the Pope; but the Government is not going to allow the Vatican to interfere in Chinese affairs. You must admit that the Vatican has never ceased to attack our Government. It has not shown very good manners, and it has not tried to understand our problems. It has just tried to use the Roman Catholic religion to undermine the work of reconstruction."

Mr. Ho considered the policy of the Sheng Kung Hui more realistic and objective, and so his Bureau encouraged it to have contacts abroad. He would approve a return delegation from the SKH to Australia, and also the attendance of Chinese bishops at the Lambeth Conference. "The government will not only not hinder them from going, but we will gladly help if we are asked."

Mr. James then took up the question of evangelism, and the ban on such methods as street meetings. "Are you not really aiming at restricting their membership to the present level, in the hope that they will ultimately die away?" In answer Mr. Ho stressed the danger of open air meetings, pointing out that Christianity is still foreign and anti-Chinese in the eyes of many. But, he added, "they have all sorts of legitimate avenues apart from that. They have their services. They have meetings in halls and churches, literature, personal visits, catechism classes, retreats, meetings in private houses and so on. They have even this extraordinary custom (at this he gave me a knowing wink) of baptizing innocent infants, who do not know what it is all about! Now, a thing like that, although opposed to reason, and however ridiculous it may seem, is harmless. We have never tried to intervene against it." Mr. James wisely did not try to argue infant baptism with him.

The fifth article is given up largely to an account of a meeting in Shanghai with 18 Christian leaders, only six of whom were Anglicans. These included Presiding Bishop Robin Chen, and Bishops K. H. Ting, Michael Chang and K. T. Mau. Other leaders present were YM Secretary Kiang Wen-han, Methodist Bishop Kaung, Baptist Pastor Chi Ching-ts'ai, Little Flock leader Miss Tso Fu-ju, and independent pastor Yang Shao-t'ang. When the meeting was thrown open for questions, Bishop Cranswick of Tasmania said, "What I'd like to know is this. A door was closed. Now it has apparently been opened, for here we all are from Australia. It goes without saying that we are overjoyed the door is opened again. But why has it opened?" Then the Archbishop of Perth said, "There's another thing. When I get back, all sorts of people are going to ask me questions about religious freedom, and what opportunities you have here now to propagate and

te" Kiang Wen-han undertook to answer this double-barreled question, and he was followed by Bishop Kaung and Pastor Chi, but James says they never did reach the core of Bishop Cranswick's question. He goes on, "I first realized at this meeting the futility of such gatherings, which repeated themselves all over China, from the point of view of getting at facts themselves, instead of what people said were facts. The Chinese technique - I do not know whether this is a recent development - is not to carry on a discussion with the cut and thrust typical of meetings in the West. It is for each side, as it were, to present a set-piece argument, and for neither side to cross-examine."

He concluded that the only really satisfactory way to collect evidence was in private conversation, or in very small groups, but was evidently not able to arrange for such, or at least does not report any.

All Chinese Christians speak of the Government in almost identical terms, which are supplied to them through the Three-self Movement in the weekly or twice-weekly lectures for church workers and pastors. The Three-self Movement, in its turn, has worked out these terms in consultation with the Bureau of Religious Affairs.

Mr. James concludes this article with the assurance that the Sheng Kung Hui, in spite of the close contact with other Protestant bodies, is still doctrinally unaffected. It has not been "colored with Pan-Protestantism." (Evidently a term of opprobrium in some Anglican circles.)

STATEMENTS BY CHRISTIANS AT THE CPPCC

In the March 18 Bulletin we carried a report of a speech made by Y.T Wu at the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference meeting on March 8. We now have a much more complete report of this speech in the mimeographed bulletin of the New China News Agency from London.

Mr. Wu is here described as Chairman of the General Synod (i.e., Assembly) of the Church of Christ in China. The news report, after detailing the specific criticisms which we reported on March 18, goes on to summarize his speech as follows: "There was undoubted prejudice against Christians in some Government organizations and schools, and even though Christians did good work they were often regarded as problems. The reasons for this were very complicated, and 'the relations of Protestantism in China with imperialism were one historical reason. Some Christians are still under such influences.' But another reason was the incorrect criticism of religion in publications of various regions. 'There is freedom to believe and also freedom to criticize religion. Religious believers who humbly seek the truth are not afraid of criticisms.' But he said that many of the critiques were sweeping denials which were not objective and denied the possibility of religious believers being progressive. Such crude criticism caused people to doubt the reality of religious freedom. The leader of China's Protestant churches recommended Mao Tse-tung's view that religious freedom meant not only protecting religion but also respecting religious belief and not adopting a scornful attitude to it."

He told the Conference "There are many signs of rejuvenation in the church of New China. Some religious denominations have built new churches, some have appointed new ministers and bishops, religious activities have increased, and people attending services in general have increased. Believers participating in Christmas celebrations are increasing every year." In conclusion he said, "We love our bright New China, and its leaders, the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. We will establish our churches well, devote our maximum strength to our country's socialist construction and we will unite closely with all Christians in the world who love justice and peace and strive for the noble goal of world peace and human progress."

We now learn that two Catholic priests addressed this same Conference on March 19. Tung Wen-lung, Vicar Capitular of the Shantung Diocese, is said to have repeated the criticism of a Protestant priest earlier in the CPPCC (If the reference is to Y.T. Wu, the New China News Agency is in error in calling him a priest.) that in some places, particularly in remote regions, religious belief was not given due respect. "This was due to lack of understanding of the policy by local officials and was not intentional. He suggested wider publicity of the policy at local government level and inspections by people's deputies and CPPCC members."